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Farm safety is stressed locally

Farm Equipment Has To Travel On Highways Too

Motorists driving in farming areas need to keep in mind how slow farm equipment moves when it must travel on a highway.

It takes an average of 18 seconds for a tractor pulling two wagons to enter and clear the highway. During those 18-seconds, a car going 50 miles per hour will travel more than a quarter of a mile.

Some farm equipment is massive in both width and length. Parts may protrude into adjoining traffic lanes, especially when the equipment is turning.

Hetzel said that equipment displaying the orange triangle with red border is traveling at speeds less than 25 miles an hour. Be prepared to slow down or stop when approaching farm machinery on the road. Remember that farm equipment has a right to be on the highway too.

Tractor Accidents Can Be Avoided

The tractor, a symbol of farming, also is one of the most dangerous farm machines.

There are five general problems that cause tractor accidents. They are excessive speed on the road, driving where the tractor can tip over, falls from the machine, improper use of the power off (PTO) mechanism and fuel handling.

Most accidents can be prevented. Nine out of 10 tractor accidents are caused by human error. Mechanical failures cause only 10 percent of the accidnets.

Hetzel said that nearly one-third of all tractor accidents happen when the farm tractor is used on the road, but that is only one out of every 25 operating hours,

Operators often drive too fast to handle the tractor safely. Doubling the speed increases by four times the chances of upset. When turning corners, the tractor is not very stable.

Make sure lights and safety equipment on a tractor are working. A "Slow Moving Vehicle" emblem must be displayed according to state law requirements.

To avoid tipping the tractor over when pulling a load, hitch the load to the drawbar. Always have the drawbar hitch at least 13 and less than 17 inches off the ground, and at least 14 inches behind the rear axle, he said. The chances of overturing increase when pulling a heavy load uphill. Add weights to the front of the tractor and move cautiously.

If the tractor gets stuck in a ditch or mud hole, try to back it out. If that is not possible, get someone to tow the tractor out and do not try any of the unsafe short cuts farmers sometimes suggest to each other.

Climb in and out of the tractor carefully to avoid a fall. Don't use the tractor platform and drawbar to store tools and materials. Keep steps and the platform clear of litter that could cause a fall.

Keep extra riders, especially children, off of the tractor.

The only way to use the PTO mechanism is to shut it off when you work on it and always keep it shielded when it is being used.

Handling fuel is hazardous. Always turn off the engine and allow it to cool at least five minutes before adding fuel to the tractor.

Never overfill a fuel tank. If it overflows, wait at least 10 minutes to start the engine so that the explosive vapor will be carried off by the air.

Always carry an Underwriters Laboratory-approved dry chemical fire extinguisher and know how to use it. Never use gasoline to wash parts or the motor. Use approved safety fuel cans for taking extra fuel to the field.

Hazardous Gases Can Be Found On Farms

Gases formed by agriculture products can be dangerous to farmers.

Four gases create common hazards--hydrogen sulphide, ammonia, carbon dioxide and methane.

Hydrogen sulphide can be produced in manure pits or any place where organic material is decaying. As little as 500 parts per million of this pungent gas will restrict breathing make artificial respiration neccessary if it is inhaled. The has tends to paralyze a person's diaphragm. Individuals can detect its rotten egg smell when they breathe it in small quantities, but the smell is not so obvious when the gas is in higher concentrations.

Anyone working in or around manure pits or tanks should use self-contained breathing apparatus similar to that used by underwater sports enthusiasts. Proper ventilation also will remove the harmful gas.

Ammonia may form from material that is high in nitrogen, such as manure. It is lighter than air and easily detected. Highly irriatating to the eyes and lungs, ammonia can be controlled by ventilation.

Carbon dioxide is heavier than air and is not detectable without special equipment. It suffocates a person by displacing oxygen in the air. A person in an oxygen deficient area of a pit or silo may lose consciousness before realizing anything is wrong.

Again, ventilation will clear the air, but a self-contained air supply should be used when the presence of carbon dioxide is suspected.

Methane gas is produced by decomposition of agricultural by-products. But, uncontrolled methane rising from manure pits can be an explosive hazard. No mathces or open flames should be permitted where methane may be present. A miner's lamp or air test devices may be used to check for combustiable gases or low oxygen levels.

Use a lifeline and make sure there is enough power on hand to lift a victim from the tank. This means at least two workers on the outside. Ventilate the space before and during work.

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